

Abstract

As data about events and objects become more commonly available, analyzing and understanding of interrelated temporal and spatial information is increasingly a concern for military commanders, intelligence analysts and business analysts. A system and method is provided for creating a multidimensional visual representation of a group of data elements having integrated temporal and spatial properties. The data elements are included in the visual representation as corresponding visual elements, such that the data elements of the group linked by at least one association. The system includes a visualization manager for assembling the group of data elements using the at least one association and for assigning a connection visual element in the visual representation between a first visual element representing a first data element of the group and a second visual element representing a second data element of the group. The system also has a spatial visualization component, such as a sprite, configured for generating a spatial domain of the visual representation to include a reference surface for providing a spatial reference frame having at least two spatial dimensions. The reference surface is for relating the first visual element to a first location of interest in the spatial reference frame and for relating the second visual element to a second location of interest in the spatial reference frame. The system also has a temporal visualization component, such as a sprite, configured for generating a temporal domain of the visual representation operatively coupled to the spatial domain, the temporal domain for providing a common temporal reference frame for the locations of interest. The temporal domain includes a first time track, such as a timeline, coupled to the first location of interest and a second time track coupled to the second location of interest, such that the first visual element is positioned on the first time track and the second visual element is positioned on the second time track. Each of the time tracks configured for visually representing a respective temporal sequence of a plurality of the data elements at each of the locations of interest of the reference surface. In implementation of the method, the connection visual element represents a distributed association in at least one of the domains between the first visual element and the second visual element such that the visual representation is displayed on a user interface for subsequent interaction with user events, including animation of the visual elements to help in the analysis of the data contained in the visual representation.